



**Testimony of Kevin Lembo, State Healthcare Advocate
Before the Public Health Committee, Connecticut General Assembly
In Support of Senate Bill 655
February 11, 2009**

Good morning Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, Senator Debicella, Representative Giegler, and members of the Public Health Committee. For the record, I am Kevin Lembo, the State Healthcare Advocate. My office is an independent state agency with a three-fold mission: assuring managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare; educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans; and, informing you of problems consumers are facing in accessing care and proposing solutions to those problems.

I submit this testimony in support of Proposed Senate Bill 655, AN ACT REQUIRING CULTURAL COMPETENCY INSTRUCTION FOR PHYSICIANS, which would require cultural competency as part of physician training. OHA is the administrative home to the (non-funded) Commission on Health Equity. Commissioners regularly discuss that the lack of cultural competency of the healthcare workforce as a significant factor that prevents us from breaking down barriers to accessible and quality healthcare.

The cultural competency of physicians is important, but it is not enough. Multiple types of licensed healthcare professionals provide primary and specialty physical and mental health care. This workforce needs to achieve cultural competency as well. We also need to recognize the high value of medical interpretation services as a route to access in both commercial and public insurance programs.

This bill is a good first step, and I commend the authors for their commitment to equal access. We must continue to acknowledge and support alternatives that reduce the disparities in healthcare access and quality faced by many residents of our state. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.